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Why Are We Here?

So many of us call ourselves Christians but what is it to be a Christians? What now? What is required of me? Is there something required of me? What does it mean to be saved? What obligations comes with this salvation? Is there an obligation? Is something required of me? Why did I become a Christian? What happens now?

Some have called themselves Christians to get to Heaven. and/or avoid Hell. Some to have a blessed life and/or avoid a cursed life. Some because it is the right thing to do. Some because it brings them joy.

Some are here to love God, ...to serve God, ...to be “a good person”, ...to love others, ...to love themselves, ...to spread the Gospel, ...to be an example, ...to please God.

When we were called, we were all called for the same purpose; to become fishers-of-men, to seek and save the lost. This was Jesus' challenge in Mark 1:16-17 and Matthew 4:18-19. He did not call us to live a better life. He promised us persecution[1]. He did not call us to go to Heaven. He called us to die.[2] He did not call us to heal the sick. He called us to heal the soul.[3]

It is not that we are not to live a better life. The Beatitudes[4] speak of a better life or rather a life with hope and a purpose. This was prophesied in Jeremiah 29:11. It is not that we were not promised Heaven but Heaven is not the reason. Rather it is the consequence. It is not that we are not to look after the sick, poor and needy. It is that their souls are more important than their comfort.

There are certain expectations of us. There are certain commands made for us. There are certain promises and rewards given. We need to separate the expectations and commands from the promises. The first expectation is to become fisher-of-men. As stated earlier, this is the stated purpose of Jesus in his calling of the first disciples.

Interestingly enough, both Matthew and Mark mentions that Jesus did this calling beside the Sea of Galilee, a lake known for its fish. They both mention that Simon and Andrew were casting their nets into the lake. They both go on to say, “For they were fishermen.” That last statement could have been left out since it was clear from the context that they must have been fishermen. What else could they have been? Hairdressers? Were they cleaning their hair nets in the lake in preparation for their next clients? Alternately, the statement that they were casting their nets into the lake could just as easily have been left out if the fact that they were fishermen was mentioned. After all, does it matter if they were casting their nets, mending their nets, preparing their boats, gutting the fish or negotiating a price with fishmongers?

I think that the fact that they were casting nets into the lake was significant in the narrative. You can

1 John 15:20-21, Luke 21:21-17

2 Matt 10:38-39, 16:24-25, John 15:12-13

3 Mark 1:15, 38-39

4 Matt 5:1-12

catch fish by dropping a line and waiting for one to bite. You can set traps that you come back later to see what success you may have had. Alternatively you can cast a net, pull it in, throw out the bad fish, keep the good and cast the nets again. The point being that as fishers-of-men we need to cast our nets instead of throwing out a line. We need to be active in fishing instead of periodically checking our traps. But that is just my 2¢ worth.

Another expectation is to face death everyday for the faith we hold.

> Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.
>
> NIV Luke 9:23-24

It was simply understood in the first century that the term, “pick up your cross,” did not mean to wear a crucifix around your neck. Rather it meant to die the death reserved for the worst of criminals. The closest modern equivalent would be, “take up your electric chair daily and follow me.” The taking up of the cross was also understood to be a public spectacle and not an execution observed by the few select as is done today. This was not an option but something that **must** be done.

But surely Jesus did not mean that we should die everyday. Most people I know can only die once. He simply meant that you must never consider your life so important that you strive to preserve it to the extent of compromising your faith. What I mean is that when a certain preacher has obtained a concealed weapons permit and always carries a handgun, an act he justifies by claiming that he may have to use lethal force to defend himself because he has received death treats, he has compromised his faith already by being willing to kill his enemy instead of loving his enemy.

We have heard so many say, “God will understand.” They are right! He will understand that you loved your life more than his words. He will understand that you put more trust in Smith and Wesson than in Jesus and YHWH[5]. No, he doesn't understand that you had to defend yourself. That was his job. No he does not understand that you could have died. That was his decision. You lived because he wanted you to live and not because you put a cap between some hooligan's eyes. If you would have died it would have been because he choose that time for you and you would not have been able to stop it.[6]

It is also expected that the living of our lives here on Earth will not interfere with our mission for God.

> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."
>
> Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."
>
> He said to another man, "Follow me."
>
> But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father.[i]"
>
> Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."
>
> Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family."
>
> Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
>
> NIV Luke 9:57-62

5 Luke 9:25-26

6 Acts 17:25-27

This does not mean that we cannot go about our lives and livelihoods. We must still take care of our Earthly needs[7] but not to our own selfish ends[8]. We must still take care of the people whom are in our lives but we do so as we live no longer of this world but of the Spirit.[9] Of course this begs the question, "what is our mission for God?"

Matt 28:18-20 lays this out clearly.

> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
>
> NIV Matt 28:19-20a

Three things in one breath; Make disciples[ii], baptizing them and teaching them obedience. This is the calling of fishers-of-men. This is how we save those we have sought. Having saved them, we teach them to obey everything taught by Jesus... including this calling to make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them obedience.

But are we not here to love God love him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength? Are we not to love each other?[10] Are we not to worship him and praise his name? Surely it is so however we do that by doing what is expected of us; to obey God and lay down our lives[11]. That is our Spiritual act of worship.[12]

> Now all has been heard;
>
> here is the conclusion of the matter:
>
> Fear God and keep his commandments,
>
> for this is the whole duty of man.
>
> NIV Ecc 12:13

TKS

7 2Thes 3:7-12

8 Phili 2:3

9 James 1:27

10 Matt 22:35-39, Mark 12:28-34

11 John 15:10-14, 1John 2:3-6, 1John 3:16

12 Rom 12:1

i ...*bury my father.* A figure of speech. Wait for my father to die. This does not mean an imminent death.

ii An apprentice or pupil whose aim is to imitate his master. An imitator.